football-playing member in 2003 was accounted for in football's expense ledger. The money was borrowed from the university's general endowment, and the athletic department is paying the interest.

So when Jim Leavitt says that his football team is revenue-producing, that should not be understood as profit-generating. I would not pretend to know what football really costs at U.S.F., but it's clearly a lot more than $4 million, maybe even twice that. And another big bill is about to come due: Leavitt's next contract.

Just in case Judy Genshaft didn't know she had a hot coach on her hands who needed a big raise, she could have learned it from reading the local press. The articles began after the end of the 2001 season, when Leavitt entertained some job feelers. "U.S.F. Needs to Make Commitment to Leavitt," read a headline in the Tampa Tribune. "U.S.F. said it wanted to play in the big leagues and built an impressive foundation," the columnist Joe Henderson wrote. "Now it has to finish the job, or risk that Leavitt will listen to the next time someone calls."

Columns like these are the essential component of setting the market for a coach and driving up his price. An echo chamber of sports journalists, boosters, alumni, fans and national sports pundits anoints the coach a civic treasure and then campaigns that this indispensable figure must be properly rewarded lest the community risk having him stolen away. This is how it happens everywhere.

As Leavitt's Bulls piled up victory after victory this season, it got ever noisier in the echo chamber. A story by the Tampa Tribune's U.S.F. beat man noted that Leavitt's $180,000 salary was way out of whack, that the average for Conference USA coaches was $410,000, that the coach at Houston—whose team Leavitt's slaughtered, 45-6!—could approach $1 million and that Leavitt was in fact one of the lowest-paid coaches in all of Division I-A.

A St. Petersburg Times columnist, Gary Shelton, celebrated Leavitt's single-mindedness—he has never purchased a CD, doesn't go to the movies, was barely aware of the Florida governor's race—and implied that the coach was too dedicated to the next game and next victory to properly focus on his own self-interest.

The drumbeat on Leavitt's behalf overlooked two things. One is that Leavitt's original contract runs through 2005, although that probably doesn't matter since college coaches are rarely held to the deals they sign. The other unaddressed question was more significant: how would U.S.F. square its big-time ambitions with its still small-time revenues?

For all the fevered energy and earnest expectations behind U.S.F. football, attendance at home games has long been stuck between 20,000 and 30,000. The team plays way across town, at the 65,000-seat Raymond James Stadium, home of the N.F.L.'s Tampa Bay Buccaneers. "We've flattened," says Tom Veit, associate athletic director. "We had tire-kickers in the begin-
ning, something like 50,000 at the first game in '97, and we need to bring them back in."

Students have not been dependable fans. About 3,500 live on campus; nearly 10,000 more live in off-campus garden apartments, most of which have swimming pools and frequent keg parties. Fifty-nine percent of U.S.F. students are female, so young men, the natural college football audience, may have a particular incentive not to stray too far from home. "If you want it to be," says the student government vice president, Dave Minckberg, "it's like spring break 24/7 around here."

One function that U.S.F. football does serve is as content, cheap programming in the 500-channel universe. Under a contract with ESPN Plus, U.S.F. football (and basketball) games are constantly up on the satellite—along with dozens of other games to be pulled down by viewers with a dish and a college sports package. The ubiquity of these televised college games makes the dream of a marketing bonanza—Jim Leavitt's fighting' Bulls as the tip of the sword—all the more difficult to achieve. Instead of becoming a "brand" like the well-known sports schools, U.S.F. is more likely to blend in with its anonymous brethren in Sports Satellite World, the Northern Arizonas, Coastal Carolinas and Boise States.

But U.S.F. has set its course. It's on the treadmill. It plays Alabama next season, Penn State in 2005 and the University of Florida in 2008. It didn't schedule these games to be embarrassed. Rebuilding with a new coach would be difficult competitively and, even more so, commercially. "If we lose Jim Leavitt, from a marketing point of view, that's not a place I want to be," Viet says. "I don't want to be at that point. He's a hometown guy. He wins. People like him."

When the local sportswriters ask Leavitt about his contract, he gives carefully bland responses. He doesn't have an agent, and it could be argued that with his fawning press, he hardly needs one. The articles clearly please him. One day he says to me: "The Tampa paper is going to have another piece coming up on my salary. But you know, I don't pay too much attention. I don't deserve anything. I'm just glad I have a job. I'm blessed."

"And I mean that. I have zero interest in leaving here. But then people say to me, 'What if you were offered $1 million to go somewhere else?' Well, then I'd probably leave. Let's be realistic."

I asked him what he thought his market value was, and he did not hesitate. "About $500,000 or $600,000," he said. "At least."

The biggest of the big-time college sporting events are intoxicating. The swirl of colors, the marching bands, the deafening roars, the over-the-top political incorrectness—Florida State's Seminole mascot riding in on horseback; a Mississippi State coach some years back, on the eve of a game against the Texas Longhorns, castrating a bull. The whole thing is a little reminiscent of what I've heard some Catholic friends of mine say: even if you're a little ambivalent about the message, the pageantry will get you every time.
In college sports, the heady mix of anticipation, adrenaline, camaraderie and school pride is the gloss over the grubby reality. Pro sports operate within some financial parameters, governed by a profit motive. College sport, by contrast, is a mad cash scramble with squishy rules. Universities run from conference to conference, chasing richer TV deals; coaches from school to school, chasing cash. It's a game of mergers and acquisitions—of running out on your partners before they run out on you.

It's understandable why universities with hundreds of millions already invested in sports can't find a way out. Far less understandable is why a school like U.S.F. would, with eyes wide open, walk in. "I felt then and still feel that U.S.F. could be a model football program," says Frank Borkowski, the former president. "One with clear policies and rules, attractive to bright students, that would not go the way of so many programs—a corrupt way."

But the whole framework of college sports, with its out-of-control spending and lax academic and ethical standards, is rotten; it's difficult to be clean within it. The "student athletes," as the N.C.A.A. insists on calling them, feel the hypocrisy. When one is caught taking the wrong thing from the wrong person—not the usual perks but actual money—what ensues is a "Casablanca"-like overabundance of shock, then a bizarre penalty phase that almost always punishes everyone but the guilty parties. Thus, when the University of Michigan finally acknowledged this fall that some members of its famed "Fab Five" basketball teams of the early 1990's may have accepted payments from a booster, the university tried to get out in front of N.C.A.A. sanctions by disqualifying this year's team—whose players were about 8 years old in the Fab Five years—from participating in the 2003 N.C.A.A. tournament.

With the greater opportunities being afforded female athletes, it should be no surprise that an outsize sense of entitlement now extends to the women. Deborah Yow, the athletic director at the University of Maryland (and one of the few women leading a big athletic department), told me about a conversation she had with an athlete who had rejected Maryland.

"We just lost a great recruit in the sport of women's lacrosse, in which we have won seven national championships," Yow said. "And one of the comments that the recruit made was that the school she had chosen over us had a beautiful new lacrosse stadium with a lovely locker room, and she even described the lockers in some detail. They were wood; that was the word she kept using. And, as she said, they all had that Nike gear hanging everywhere. And I've been to that facility. And I know what she said was true."

In theory, Yow could have been pleased to be rejected by such a spoiled child. But she does not have that luxury. Instead, she felt relieved that a planned complex to be used by Maryland women's lacrosse team would be the equal of this other palace. "We, as athletic directors, are interested in having the best possible facilities because we have noticed along the way that recruits are interested in this, that it does matter," she says.
adrenaline, camaraderie, and more. How do these sports operate within the system? College sport, by the way, sometimes makes Universities run from coaches to scandal to bright students, that's the accepted way.

With its out-of-control nature, one can imagine that the N.C.A.A. insists on calling it what it is: the wrong thing from the wrong place, that's what ensues is a various penalty phase that i think is important. Thus, when the University of Maryland, one of many schools, may have accepted payments in front of N.C.A.A. rules, they were about 8 years into the 2003 N.C.A.A. tournament.

In the case of female athletes, it should be noted that this matter extends to the University of Maryland (in the apartment), told me about a Maryland.

In the case of women's lacrosse, in which 65 percent of players were labeled as “she”, one of the coaches had chosen over us to talk in the locker room, and she even used that term; that was the word she wrote hanging everywhere. And it was the word she used.

“Her” was the word she said was true.

She was rejected by such a coach, she felt relieved that her lacrosse team would be affected, that she is not, that she is interested in having a team, that's the way that she wants.

College sport could not survive if it were viewed only as mass entertainment. On another level, it serves as a salvation story. The enterprise rests mostly on a narrative of young men pulled from hopeless situations, installed at universities, schooled in values by coaches and sent off into the world as productive citizens.

No one is better suited to tell the story than Lee Roy Selmon. The youngest of nine children in Eufaula, Okla., he excelled in athletics and earned a football scholarship, as did two of his brothers, to the University of Oklahoma. Lee Roy Selmon became the first-draft pick of the new Tampa Bay Buccaneers, an N.F.L. Hall of Famer, then a Tampa banker. The Lee Roy Selmon Expressway is one of the city's major thoroughfares.

To Selmon, who became U.S.F.'s athletic director a year and a half ago, college sports is a giant scholarship program for needy children. Of football's 100-player rosters, he says, "The more people here, the more people getting an education, the better. It's about generations - about student athletes developing abilities, being citizens, having families and being able to nurture their children."

One evening, I visited with some U.S.F. football players at their mandatory study hall, which takes place inside a wide-open rectangular room as big as a good-size banquet hall. Their monitor, Vik Bhode, a trim engineering student, sat just inside the front door, paging through a book called "The Dimensions of Parking." The players clustered at round tables, reading textbooks or writing. Most had started their day very early and had already attended classes, lifted weights, endured a three-hour practice and gone to meetings in which they watched game film with coaches.

I took a walk through the room and peeked at the players' coursework. John Miller, a freshman offensive lineman, was studying vocabulary words from a textbook. On his list were "burgeoning," "inflection," "emanate," "insidious" and "obscenity." "It's a lot of hard words," he said. "But they're good for you."

Vince Brewer, a junior running back, was about to start an informative speech, which he thought he'd write on the subject of what causes a player to pass out during practice. "We get told a lot about dehydration, and the professor said to pick something you know a lot about," Chris Carothers, a massive offensive lineman, told me bluntly that he does not much like school, "but as a football player, it's something you've got to do."

In all of my interactions with U.S.F. football players, I was struck at how mannerly they were. Nearly all are from Florida, many from small towns, and in a classically Southern way, they are yes-sir, no-sir types. Maybe because U.S.F. has not yet reached its ambitions and neither the team nor its players are widely famous — not even on their own campus — there wasn't a lot of swagger.

"My mom and dad had me when they were in 11th grade," Marquel Blackwell, the Bulls' star quarterback, said. "I was raised, basically, by my two
grandmothers. The main thing they taught me was how to respect other people."

Not a whole lot of trouble has attached to Jim Leavitt's boys in the six 75 years of U.S.F. football, nothing of the sort that occurs at some places and serves to indict a whole program. There have been some scuffles, as well as a gunplay accident in which a player was wounded.

"We encourage the players to be as much a part of normal campus life as possible," said Phyllis LaBaw, the associate athletic director for academic support. But no one pretends that they really are much like the typical U.S.F. student.

Nearly 70 percent of the U.S.F. football team is black on a campus that is otherwise 70 percent white. (Only 11 percent of U.S.F. students are black; the rest of the minority population is Hispanic and Asian and Native American.) The football players tend to be poorer than other students and more in need of academic help.

To be a football player at U.S.F., or an athlete of any kind, is like taking your mother to school with you—or several mothers. Academic counselors meet with athletes at least weekly. They sometimes follow them right to the door of a classroom, which in the trade is known as "eyeballing" a player to class. Where a lot of players are grouped in one class, tutors sometimes sit in and take notes. Counselors communicate directly with professors. "We don't ever ask for favors," LaBaw said. "But professors do provide us with information, which is vital."

Football players who miss a class or a mandatory study session get "run" by coaches—meaning they must show up on the practice field at 6 A.M. to be put through a series of sprints by a coach who is not happy to be there at that hour. "It is very punitive," LaBaw said.

LaBaw's department employs four full-time counselor and about 40 tutors and has an annual budget of $400,000. The staff serves all 450 intercollegiate athletes at U.S.F., so the 105 football players are less than a quarter of the clients—but as is the case with so much else, football sucks up more resources than its raw numbers would indicate. "They need more help," LaBaw said of the footballers, "but what we're doing works. Last year our football players had a mean G.P.A. of 2.52, which if we were already in Conference USA would have been the best in the conference—including Army."

LaBaw is part den mother, part drill sergeant—loving and supportive or confrontational and blunt, depending on the needs of the moment. Under her desk, she keeps a big box; when the season began, it had 5,000 condoms in it, all different colors. She hands them out like lollipops along with however much sex education she can blurt out.

Her effort, while well intentioned, is a version of closing the barn door after the horses have run out. Of the 105 players on U.S.F.'s football team—most of them between 18 and 23 years old—about 30 are fathers and many have produced multiple children. "I would say there's a total of 60 children from this team, and that number increases every week as they get older."

What LaBaw says about the program he has been involved with for five hours a day since the fall that fathers have to step up and provide support that they find themselves in or grandmothers have to provide care center, is not necessarily true.

In her interviews, she says that her daughter will not be given him her car in the locker due to their relationship away in San Francisco and would really be worth emotionally.

Undoubtedly, the N.F.L. throws good for the lives that are, and guess no one."

LaBaw says that if the fathers, the players, to step up and rounded all the other mothers and the players show you.

For myself, even of interest the athletes to the lives of interest the athletes to the lives of interest and in that I'm sure LaBaw he could. It's certainly not, normally our school for football players, but sit and watch.

Because LaBaw does widely love and like the players, his good, it's one and the guys do not have to wear anything rings. Four is in the world, and
team, and that's a conservative estimate,” said LaBaw. “It's amazing how quickly it occurs, usually in the first year. Or they come to school already fathers.”

What this means is that the recipients of Lee Roy Selmon’s scholarship program for needy young men are recreating the need that many of them came from—children living in poverty, without fathers at home. With their five hours per day of football-related activity on top of class and studying, the fathers have no time even to change a diaper, let alone work to financially support their children. Most of the children live with their mothers or aunts or grandmothers. Some who are nearby spend the day at the university’s day-care center, yet another cost of college football since the service is offered virtually free to U.S.F. students.

In DeAndrew Rubin’s portrait in the U.S.F. football media guide, it says that his father drowned when he was 11 months old. It adds, “Father had given him a teddy bear for his first Christmas in 1978, and he places it in his locker during every game.”

Rubin, 24, has two children, 3 years old and 10 months, and is engaged to their mother, his girlfriend since high school. They live just 30 minutes away in St. Petersburg. “I see them as often as I can, so if I would pass, they would remember me,” he said. “I can’t help that much financially, but emotionally I want to be there for them.”

Unlike several other U.S.F. fathers who said they planned to make the N.F.L., Rubin is considered a prospect, although no sure thing. “It would be good for our situation,” he said. “I don’t want to have to work a 9-to-5; I guess nobody really does.”

LaBaw spends a lot of time talking to the players. “Those who are fathers, there’s a comfort aspect—having children is an opportunity to be surrounded by more love. Which is what they’ve always had, from grandmothers and aunts and cousins. But there is also this trophy aspect. It’s let me show you the pictures, or the multiple pictures.”

Football is at the center of Jim Leavitt’s world, so he is not one to question the time or money devoted to it. He does not seem to have a great deal of interest in the nonfootball world. Leavitt makes appearances on campus and in the community, often related to fund-raising, but several people told me he can be brusque. If he says he has 20 minutes to give, then he’s normally out the door in 20 minutes. There is always a practice to conduct or a football tape to be watched. He watches game tapes, and tapes of practices. “I sit and watch film all day long,” he says. “I’m a reclus.”

Because football is so central to him, he assumes his team’s success is widely known and that it translates into other realms—he believes, without a doubt, in the concept of football as tip of the marketing sword. “We’ve had guys drafted into the N.F.L.,” he says. “We have two guys with Super Bowl rings. How much does the university spend for that? What’s it worth? That’s worldwide publicity for the University of South Florida, right?”
I asked Leavitt if his long football hours left him much time with his 7-year-old daughter. "Quality time," he said, then repeated it as if trying to convince himself. "Quality time. It's got to be quality time."

There is one slice of humanity that Leavitt connects with — his players. "That's why I'm in this," he says. "The players. The relationships I have with those young men and the ability to make a difference in their lives. My mission is to help young people in every aspect of life. If I lose sight of that, I'll get out of coaching. The other reason I coach is for that moment when you are victorious. That's hard to create in any other part of life. You feel such contentment. That moment is so powerful." At halftime of U.S.F.'s season finale against Houston, Leavitt grew so agitated that he excitedly head-butted several of his helmeted players and came away bloody.

Beyond the field, Leavitt had reason to believe he had made a difference. His players respond to him as an authority figure and as a friend. They have absorbed his laser focus. They play football. They go to class and mandatory study hall. When the season is over, they lift weights and run. Marquel Blackwell, the quarterback, told me that more established programs like Florida and Nebraska showed interest in him but wanted to switch his position. Of Leavitt, he says: "He believed in me, and I believe in him back. I've given my heart to that man."

On the night of the big game, with U.S.F.'s home winning streak on the line against Southern Mississippi, President Genshaft played host to a couple of dozen guests in a luxury box at Raymond James Stadium — a crowd that included Florida's lieutenant governor and an assortment of local business types and politicians. Mike Griffin, the student government president, was in the box, too, wearing a "Bulls for Jeb" campaign button.

Because of Selmon's iconic status, his box is the more coveted invitation, and Vicki Mitchell and her staff put together his list for maximum impact. They had targeted a wealthy U.S.F. graduate and Los Angeles lawyer as a potential big donor, but he had become critical of the athletic program on chat rooms devoted to U.S.F. sports. (Fund-raisers monitor such things.) Selmon called the lawyer during a trip to Los Angeles, just to warm him up, then invited him to fly in and sit in his box for the game. The lawyer accepted and showed up at the game with a friend who wore a muscle shirt. But both men fidgeted and looked impatient, then bolted at halftime.

The large-framed woman sitting in a corner of the box paid much more interest and stayed to the end. Selmon spent time visiting with her, at one point positioning himself on one knee in the aisle next to her. She was another potentially deep-pocketed donor: Lucille Harrison, a Florida resident and Shaquille O'Neal's mother.

U.S.F. beat the odds. It preserved its home winning streak in a stirring game decided on the last play, a missed Southern Mississippi field-goal attempt. By season's end, Leavitt's long hours had paid off beyond what any football prognosticator could have predicted. The Bulls finished the season with a record of 9–2, including a bid to a bowl. But the bowls snubbed Leavitt immediately. "I'm not going to a crossroads. We could easily add some money and would it start a fire?"

As the first guests, an alumni couple with their arms around the closing act of the season, got to keep their bull on the field and some money and a reputation.

On December 31, he signed his contract and signed his contract and, to his delight, received a contract to receive a contract, either way, he will have to pay medical bills just keep going.

QUESTIONING

1. Is this a general, or is this a special one? Why do you think so?

2. As a famous saying goes, "A leader is a person who people think he is."

3. What do you think of the chapter? What can you say about its style?

4. How do you feel about this chapter's message? Would you recommend it to others? Why or why not?
of 9–2, including a dismantling of Bowling Green, then ranked 25th in the nation. A bid to a minor bowl, the money-losing kind, looked possible, but the bowls snubbed U.S.F. in favor of teams with lesser records but bigger names. Leavitt immediately surfaced as a possibility to fill open coaching jobs at marquee schools, including Alabama and Michigan State. The new program was at a crossroads. Was it going to ante up for its coach, and his assistants too, which could easily add an instant $500,000 or more to the annual football budget? Or would it start all over with someone new?

As the field goal flew wide in the Southern Miss game, one of Selmon’s guests, an alum and successful stockbroker, jumped out of his seat, threw his arms around the U.S.F. athletic director and got right to the point. “We’ve got to keep this man!” he shouted, referring to Leavitt. “Let’s raise this man some money and keep him here!”

On Dec. 12, the University of South Florida tipped up Jim Leavitt’s contract and signed him to a new five-year deal that more than doubled his salary. If he keeps winning, he probably won’t make it to the final year of this contract, either, when he’s scheduled to make nearly $700,000. U.S.F. will have to pay more to keep him, or his assistants, and here’s where the College Football Association might come into play.

That’s how it is when you decide to play with the big boys. The bills just keep on getting bigger.

QUESTIONING THE TEXT

1. Is this article more about college football, big-time college sports in general, football at the University of South Florida, or another subject? Why do you think the editors included this article in a chapter on education?

2. As a feature article published in the New York Times Magazine, this piece is arguably of a different genre than the other prose selections in this chapter. As a journalist, Sokolove probably saw himself as writing a report on college football rather than making an argument about it. Do you think he does make an argument? Does the article have a thesis? If so, what is it, and how does Sokolove support it?

3. What does the opening description of the University of South Florida campus have to do with the rest of the article? What details in this description stand out, and how do they prepare you for information that follows? What other descriptive details does Sokolove provide throughout the article, and what points do they seem to make or emphasize?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

4. How do you think Adrienne Rich (p. 71) would react to this article? Would she agree or disagree with the perspective offered by Sokolove? Rich asserts, “[N]o woman is really an insider in the institutions fath-